

LESSON PLAN

Communications Process

TASK: Understanding the Communications Process

CONDITION: In a small group discussion environment.

STANDARD:

1. Definition of Effective Communication.
2. Elements of the Communication Process.
3. Modes of Communication.
4. Communication Barriers.
5. Cross-Cultural Misunderstandings.
6. Barriers to Cross-Cultural Communications
7. Accents.

TYPE OF INSTRUCTION: Instruction and small group discussion.

TIME OF INSTRUCTION: 2 Hours

MEDIA: Slides

LEAD IN: One of the most important leadership skills is the ability to communicate effectively. Not only must you understand what you think you hear, but understand what was actually said (and what is not said). During this block of instruction you will learn the importance of effective communication, and how it relates to you as a leader.

PART I. DEFINITION

SLIDE #1

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- **Definition.**
- **Guidelines.**
- **Congruent behavior.**
- **Incongruent behavior.**

QUESTION: How do you define effective communications? Answers should reflect the following.

1. **Definition.** Effective communications is defined as the successful exchange of information between individuals.

2. **Guidelines.** An effective communicator is successful in establishing an active two-way link with another individual or group. How?

- a. Prepare yourself. Be ready to listen. If you are not focused on receiving the message, you may not fully receive or understand.
- b. Check partner. Verify what is said by the individual communicating the message. This ensures there is no misunderstanding.
- c. Be positive. Tell the person how their behavior will affect you or the organization, but do not tell them that it may affect him/her. (In other words do not threaten the person.)
- d. Use "I" messages. I messages are means by which you can tell another person what their behavior is and how the behavior is affecting you often with the express intent of getting them to repeat or change their behavior.
- e. Be specific. Tell the person exactly what you see, and hear, but do not judge and/or evaluate their behavior.
- f. Use active listening. Active listening is a process of listening to understand. It involves listening to the words, voice, and non-verbal behavior of the other person and being aware of your own feelings.
- g. Stay focused. If you want to understand another person, you must focus intensely upon his or her behavior and communication. Listen closely to the words, voice, and non-verbal behavior of the other person and be aware of your own feelings.

3. The following are some key factors of interpersonal communication:

- a. Self-concept. Self concept is the most important factor. It reflects how we see ourselves.
- b. Poor self-concept. Poor self-concept equals poor communication. (Negative feedback may also produce poor self-concept.
- c. Coping with angry feelings. Rising anxiety can block accurate hearing. When this occurs the communication process is hindered. Therefore, when you receive negative feedback, stay in touch with your anxiety level.

d. Admit your emotions. Let the other person know what behavior is troublesome to you, so he or she knows what to change. This also avoids the heightened defensiveness that blame produces. Don't just say "PVT Smith, I see that you knocked over the bookcase as you walked by, and left it that way," express how this affects you. A good response would be "PVT Smith, I am confused by your conduct lately. What is going on?"

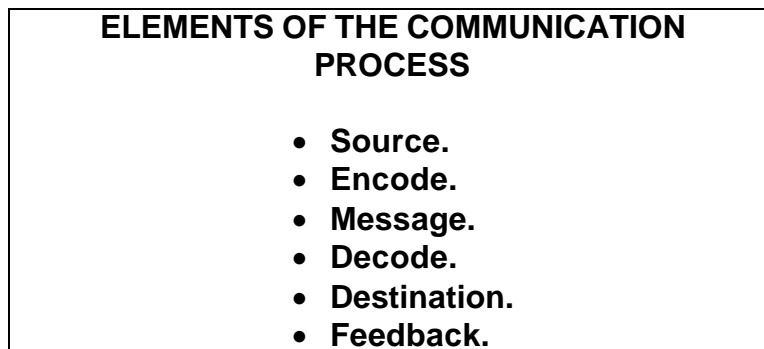
5. **Congruent Behavior** is the state of being consistent in character. It means that your behavior matches the word (talking the talk, walking the walk). Stated plainly, doing what you say.

6. **Incongruent Behavior.** Behavior that is opposite of congruent behavior. In other words, talking the talk and not walking the walk.

EXAMPLE: If I tell you that Army policy prohibits senior noncommissioned officers from dating subordinates in the same command, but I as a noncommissioned officer date my subordinates, my behavior is incongruent.

PART II. ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

SLIDE #2



1. The elements of communications process are:

- a. **Source.** Individual with an idea.
- b. **Encode.** This source depends upon the signal.
- c. **Message.** A signal.
- d. **Decode.** Translates the message into information that is meaningful.
- e. **Destination.** Receiver.
- f. **Feedback.** Is the verbal or nonverbal communication to a person or group providing information as to how their behavior is affecting or influencing you.

SLIDE #3

STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

- **Friendly, sociable, or playful.**
- **Directive, persuasive, demanding, evaluative, blaming, or praising.**
- **Speculative, tentative, uncertain, searching, reflecting, exploring or intellectual.**
- **Disclosing, revealing, explicit, responsive, accepting, and aware.**

2. **Styles of communication.** Styles are how you talk about something. Different styles result from different intentions. However, the different ways we communicate truth and meaning are not universal and can cause a number of problems in a diverse organization. The Army contains soldiers who speak different languages, but even soldiers who speak the same language may use that language in different ways. What everyone must understand is that being different does not mean being inferior.

3. There are four different styles of communication. These styles when shifted dramatically change the message. Effective communication involves matching your intention with your style.

NOTE: Use two of the below styles as examples.

4. **Style I.** Is friendly, sociable, or playful.

- a. Used to keep things on an “even keel.”
- b. Passes time and fills social voids.
- c. Not intended to change anything. Characterized by:
 - (1) “It” is statements (speaking for no one).
 - (2) “I like” statements-- preferences.
 - (3) Almost always omits direct disclosure of immediate, intimate feelings, and intentions.
 - (4) Meets everyday social expectations.

NOTE: Use two of the below styles as examples.

5. **Style II.** Is directive, persuasive, demanding, evaluative, blaming, or praising. This style usually involves tension or dissatisfaction.

a. Often involves an attempt to force change, shutting off exploration of issues.

b. May lead to misunderstanding.

c. Based on closed assumptions and interpretations the speaker holds about persons or situations, attacks others sense of self-worth.

d. Power is valued over clarification, understanding, cooperation, and accuracy.

e. "Win or lose" orientation. Characterized by:

(1) Directing, ordering, advising, recommending, and praising.

(2) Labeling, name calling, judging, and fault finding.

(3) Blaming, accusing, and complaining.

(4) Self-depreciation.

(5) Speaking for others or no one.

(6) Superlatives and imperatives.

(7) Right-wrong; good-bad; should-ought.

(8) Closed indirect questions and "why" questions.

NOTE: Style II is usually ineffective for resolving issues. It deals with issues indirectly, or buries real issues. Not all style II is negative. Selling, bargaining, promoting, advocating, preaching, and lecturing often use Style II communication. Style II can help you move toward further consideration of an issue.

6. **Style III.** Is speculative, tentative, uncertain, searching, reflecting, exploring, or intellectual.

- a. Demonstrate willingness to examine, explore, and understand self or others.
- b. Includes general spirit of inquiry.
- c. Focuses on past causes of behavior, or future possibilities.
- d. Begins to identify and clarify issues, examines relevant background information and generates alternative courses of action (a choice between two or more possibilities). Characterized by:
 - (1) Questions that focus on partner and liberal use of checking out.
 - (2) Ask for feedback, but does not volunteer feedback.
 - (3) Information is intellectualized.
 - (4) Lacks feeling and intention statements.

NOTE: Style III is a limited style. Creates a climate for further exploration, but does little to encourage significant change in relationships. Does not deal with core issues or cause commitment to action.

7. Style IV. Is disclosing, revealing, explicit, responsive, accepting, and aware.

- a. Intentions and behaviors demonstrate a commitment to deal completely and congruently with an issue.
- b. Expresses an intention to pursue an issue openly and directly.
- c. Requires contact with one's own awareness, accepting it and trusting it.
- d. Identify incongruent dimensions of self-awareness.
- e. Primary focus is on self.
- f. Demonstrates spirit of caring and mutual support. Characterized by:
 - (1) Statement, not questions.
 - (2) Heightened awareness.
 - (3) Disclosure of intentions.

(4) Discovery and creation of congruent solutions.

(5) Clear speaking for self, “I” statements.

NOTE: Style IV seeks to share a complete picture of self-awareness, fully and honestly with partner.

PART III.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

SLIDE #4

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

- **Language barriers.**
- **Different communication styles.**
- **Physical barriers.**
- **Perceptual barriers.**
- **Noise.**

1. **Communication Barriers.** The need to communicate is universal within all organizations, but more significant in the Army among soldiers preparing for combat. However, the different ways we communicate truth and meaning are not universal and can cause problems in a diverse organization. It is obvious that the Army consists of people who speak different languages, but even those who speak the same language speak in different ways. Misunderstanding is often a problem between soldiers who are very much alike, but it poses an even greater barrier between those who are ethnically or culturally different.

2. **Language Barriers.** It is easy to see how misunderstandings can occur between people who speak different languages. Even with the use of a skilled translator important parts of a message may be lost. A language also functions more effectively when used in its cultural context. Mistakes in translation or interpretation between soldiers can be very costly. They can do a great deal of harm by creating misunderstandings within a unit.

3. **Different Communication Styles.** Even soldiers who speak the same language will have different ways of structuring information, presenting arguments, using different “styles” for social and professional exchanges, and making cultural distinctions and assumptions about how we interpret what others say. What we all must understand is that being different does not mean being inferior. Communication is more than just an exchange of information. It is more than words and consists of four specific ingredients:

- a. The information being transmitted.
- b. The feeling and emotion that is appropriate.
- c. The nonverbal message.
- d. The request or implied expectation of a response.

4. Physical Barriers.

- a. Distance.
- b. Heat and cold.
- c. Individual's physical health.
- d. Speech pattern and articulation.
- e. Pronunciation.

5. Perceptual Barriers.

- a. Past experience.
- b. Hidden agendas (you are good, I am not).
- c. Stereotypes.

6. Noise. Any factor that disrupts or confuses communication.

PART IV. CROSS-CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

SLIDE #5

CROSS-CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- **Social courtesies.**
- **Flow of information.**
- **Assertiveness.**
- **Honesty .**

1. **Cross Cultural Misunderstandings.** Most misunderstandings among soldiers result from cross-cultural experiences and do not necessarily occur from only one episode or misunderstanding. One misunderstanding leads to another misunderstanding which can lead to an unsuccessful encounter. Each side begins to blame the other. Sometimes soldiers involved in a cross-cultural exchange will become emotionally hooked on one or two components and miss the meaning or purpose of the message.

QUESTION: How many of you can remember your last misunderstanding with another person? Was it just one incident?

NOTE: We will now examine some of the common causes of cross-cultural misunderstandings. Use the following points for discussion:

2. **Social Courtesies.** Within our English language there are hidden codes and cues that control our conversations during business, social gatherings or in meetings. Some of the most frequently heard complaints about those who speak English as a second language includes the following:

SLIDE #6

FREQUENT COMPLAINTS ABOUT THOSE WHO SPEAK ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

- They are impolite and do not show proper respect.
- They will not admit when they do not understand something.
- They do not know how to get along with others.
- They stick together and speak their own language.
- They will not be direct, or ever get to the point.
- They cannot be trusted and do not inspire confidence.

QUESTION: What have you heard said about people from the city, country, north, south, east or west?

NOTE: If you have not learned the social courtesies of a given culture you may feel rejected and frustrated in your efforts to communicate and get along with others.

RE-SHOW SLIDE #5

CROSS-CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- **Social courtesies.**
- **Flow of information.**
- **Assertiveness.**
- **Honesty.**

3. **Flow of Information.** How soldiers arrange information depends on their cultural experiences. Many European cultures arrange information in a linear fashion, going directly from a starting point to a specific objective or conclusion. People from Arab, Latin, and Asian cultures may tend to communicate in a less linear fashion. They are more likely to branch off in a series of directions or go

full circle before getting to what the listener may perceive as the point of the message.

4. **Culture also affects how and when business is discussed.** A special problem experienced during cross-culture communication is not knowing how information should flow or when it is appropriate to engage in certain kinds of discussions. For instance, some believe that in the northern United States, people waste little time on social niceties when conducting business. However, some others believe that in the South, social courtesies are a way of life, and being sociable is a requirement to establish trust and to “grease the skids” for business. This difference in protocol might also exist between different industries and institutions.

5. **Assertiveness.** People from different cultures will have different distinctions about assertive behavior. Unlike many cultures, Americans perceive being assertive as a good management or strong leadership trait. However, unless properly trained, some individuals may have difficulty in distinguishing where assertiveness ends and aggressive behavior begins. For example, when majority members try to be friendly, some minorities may see their behavior as aggressive, prying, or even being confrontational. In addition, some women who are unaware of cultural differences may view assertiveness as a violation of personal space, while others may see the same behavior as an attempt to make sexual advances.

NOTE: Have students give some examples.

6. **Honesty.** Americans believe that telling the truth is essential for real communications. “Honesty is the best policy,” “tell it like it is,” or “being up-front” is the message of straight talk. As you continue your Army career, truth and candor will be an integral part of your training and the Army ethic. However, you must understand that in some other cultures the need, or desire for honesty is not as valued as other traits such as courtesy, loyalty to family, sensitivity to a friend’s feeling, or the need to “save face.”

PART V. BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

SLIDE #7

BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

- **Songs, symbols, and gestures.**
- **Accents.**
- **Jive and jargon.**
- **Lack of trust.**

NOTE: Have the students give some examples of the above, and discuss how they may prevent some misunderstandings. If the class is diversely mixed, have students share with the class some examples of their experiences.

1. Barriers to Communication. Communication in the Army is the method by which soldiers exchange and disseminate information. It is also the foundation for all professional and personal relationships regardless of circumstances. Therefore, a breakdown or barrier in communications can be very costly or even destructive for everyone involved.

NOTE: For the next few minutes we will examine some of the more common barriers of cross-cultural communications. Use the following points for discussion:

2. Symbols. Webster defines a symbol as “something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance; a visible sign of something invisible (the lion is a symbol of courage).” Ethnic, racial, or cultural symbolism may take the form of actions, sounds, or objects which are not important in themselves, but which direct attention to something that is considered important by the group. Most groups use symbols to show belonging and membership. Just as social organizations, religions, businesses, and political parties have their own sets of symbols, so do various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.

QUESTION: How important are trademarks for businesses and consumers? Which trademarks have made a strong impression on you? Example: Nike check mark that has become a universal symbol since Tiger Woods endorsed Nike and won the Masters.

3. To understand group symbolism, you must be aware of the self-concepts which are involved within the groups. These concepts have often developed as a reaction to isolation from or rejection by the power establishment. They are expressed through a strong identity and solidarity and result in a increase in personal pride and public identity.

4. A cultural symbol is an item or way of behaving which carries a special meaning for an ethnic or racial group. It is important for you to know about cultural symbols and their importance to individuals and group identity. This knowledge helps to create and maintain effective human relations and enhances unit cohesion. Some examples of cultural symbols are clothing, flags, special handshakes, and inscriptions on hats and shirts. These symbols can help develop a healthy morale and esprit-de-corps among soldiers, but they must be understood to be effective.

NOTE: Ensure students recognize that signs and symbols can also be antagonizing toward other groups. Use the following for group discussion.

SLIDE #8

SIGNS AND GESTURES

- **Malcolm “X”.**
- **Confederate flag.**
- **Handshakes.**
- **Peace sign.**
- **Political caricatures.**
- **National flags.**
- **Clenched fist.**

5. Signs and Gestures. Certain physical gestures or “body language” may be used by different cultural groups to show pride or solidarity. The symbols used by some groups are often viewed by others as a lack of professionalism, display of resentment, or outward hostility rather than as gestures of unity and cultural expression. Some examples are:

- a. Malcolm “X” (Black Power/Militancy/Separatism).
- b. Confederate Flag (Southern Culture/Traditions/Slavery).
- c. Handshakes (Fraternities, Clubs, Black Unity).
- d. Peace Sign (National Movement/Passive/Weakness).
- e. Political Caricatures (Elephant/Donkey/Left/Right).
- f. National Flags (Ethnic Unity/Patriotism/Anti-American)
- h. Clenched Fist (Black Power/Solidarity/Violence).

6. Clothing and Appearance. On special occasions, many ethnic groups express a pride in their self-concept by wearing clothing that symbolizes their heritage, ethnic or cultural group. Examples are:

- a. Irish-Americans wear green on St. Patrick’s Day.
- b. German-Americans wear lederhosen (leather trousers) for German festivals.
- c. African traditional clothing, head-dress or jewelry.

wif” are marked as being poorly educated. Yet there can be a double standard. When some individuals use slang or improper English, it is assumed they are using it on purpose to emphasize a point or to communicate humor. When a minority uses the same slang, he or she may be perceived as not knowing any better. Use of certain negative terms by minority soldiers is called “jive,” while negative terms used by majority soldiers are jargon. The problem and ultimate barrier to communication is that one is seen as illiterate while the other is thought to be colorful.

9. **Lack of Trust.** Many people believe that trust is an essential ingredient to any communication process. Some minorities, including women, have a great deal of anxiety toward those who are culturally different or who have the power to control and shape their destiny. Their past experiences can make minorities feel they must confront or demand respect to ensure fair treatment. Their perceptions about how they will be treated can detract from real issues because of their reaction to the process of communication.

CLOSING: During this block of instructions you learned the importance of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. As a leader, effective communication is critical. What you say, and how well you say it, will be a major factor in your leadership abilities. Do you have any questions?